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The Water Resources Development Act of 1999

The Water Resources Development Act of 1999 (WRDA 99) passed unanimously in both the House and Senate on August 5, 1999. The President signed it into law (Public Law 106-53) August 17, 1999. Because it is an authorization law, a WRDA approves projects, studies and programs and authorizes appropriations, but does not appropriate funds. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that if the entire act were funded, the total cost would be \$6.1 billion, with \$4.2 billion as the federal share and \$1.9 billion in non-federal funds.

PROJECTS

WRDA 99 authorizes 45 projects in 19 states and Puerto Rico. If funded, these projects would cost an estimated \$1.41 billion in federal money and \$88 million in non-federal funds, for a cost-shared total of \$2.3 billion.

Continuing Authorities Program – WRDA 99 also increases the federal spending limits for several of the Continuing Authorities Programs (CAP) – those relating to flood control, navigation and mitigating damages, and hurricane and storm damage reduction. CAP operates under several laws delegating the Chief of Engineers authority to approve certain projects, up to specified dollar amounts (subject to fund availability).

INITIATIVES

Section 212 Authority – The act includes a Flood Hazard Mitigation and Riverine Ecosystem Restoration Program (informally known as Challenge 21), with authorized funding of \$200 million over a five-year period. This initiative focuses on more sustainable solutions to flooding problems by examining non-structural solutions in flood-prone areas while retaining traditional measures where appropriate.

Other Environmental Provisions – In addition to authorizing environmental studies and projects and establishing Challenge 21, WRDA 99:

- increases the annual program limit for environmental dredging, i.e. removing contaminated sediments,
- increases authorization for funding to test sediment decontamination technologies,
- directs a comprehensive study of Great Lakes basin and the collection, compilation and analysis of information from all sources relevant to the Great Lakes biohydrological system,

- increases the annual authorized funding level for the upper Mississippi River Environmental Management Plan and authorizes a similar environmental protection and enhancement program for the Missouri and middle Mississippi Rivers,
- increases authorized appropriations or authorizes new programs for watersheds or environmental restoration for 10 new areas.

Shore Protection – The act gradually phases in a new cost-sharing formula for periodic shoreline nourishment. It changes the split from the federal government’s portion being 65 percent and the non-federal share being 35 percent to a 50-50 cost-share becoming effective on the program carried out after Jan. 1, 2003. The act also requires a national study of the nation’s shores and creating a National Coastal Data Bank.

Studies – WRDA 99 authorizes and directs 55 project or location-specific studies and several programmatic or regional studies. They are, by state:

- Arkansas – Boydsville and Greers Ferry Lake;
- California – Del Norte County, Frazier Creek in Tulare County, Mare Island Strait, Strawberry Creek in Berkeley, Sweetwater Reservoir in San Diego County, and Whitewater River Basin;
- Florida – Destin-Noriega Point, Little Econlackhatchee River Basin, Port Everglades in Broward County, and (in cooperation with the Environmental Protection Agency) Lake Allatoona, Etowah River and the Little River Watershed;
- Idaho – Boise, Goose Creek Watershed in Oakley, Little Wood River in Gooding, Snake River in Lewiston, and Snake and Payette River system;
- Louisiana – Cameron Parish West of Calcasieu River, Coastal Louisiana, Grand Isle and vicinity, and Gulf Intracoastal Waterway Ecosystem from Chef Menteur to the Sabine River;
- Massachusetts – Muddy River in Brookline and Boston, Westport;
- Michigan – St. Clair River and Lake St. Clair; St. Clair shores, Woodtick Peninsula;
- Mississippi – Pascagoula Harbor, Tunica Lake Weir;
- Montana – Yellowstone River;
- Nevada – Las Vegas Valley;
- New Mexico – Southwest Valley in Albuquerque;
- New York – Cayuga Creek, Lake Champlain (New York and Vermont), Oswego River Basin;
- North Carolina – White Oak River;
- Ohio – Arcola Creek Watershed in Madison, Cleveland Harbor, Toledo Harbor, Toussaint River in Carroll Township, Western Lake Erie Basin (Ohio, Indiana and Michigan);
- Pennsylvania – Schuylkill River in Norristown;
- South Carolina – Coastal areas, Santee Delta Focus Area, Waccamaw River;
- South Dakota – Day County, Niobrara River and Missouri River;
- Texas – Corpus Christi, Mitchell’s Cut Channel, Mouth of Colorado River;
- Utah – Santa Clara River;
- Washington – Mount St. Helens;
- West Virginia – Kanawha River in Fayette County, state ports.

The programmatic or regional studies involve:

- Cost-sharing for construction, operation and maintenance of deep draft harbors;
- The entire Great Lakes basin to ensure best use of water resources,
- The Great Lakes' navigation system's effectiveness,
- Nutrient loading caused by dredged material disposal in the Chesapeake Bay,
- Erosion damage to levees and other flood control structures on the upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers,
- A plan to address water and related land resource problems in the upper Mississippi and Illinois River basins, and
- Controlling and managing waterborne debris in the Susquehanna River Basin, for New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland, and the upper Chesapeake Bay, Maryland.

Modifications – The act authorizes modifying 91 projects or programs, that if funded, has an estimated total cost of \$1.12 billion. Modifications include 29 projects and increases in program limits for three regional programs (one in Pennsylvania and two in West Virginia). It deauthorizes all or part of 12 navigation projects – all in Connecticut and Maine – and reauthorizes six projects in Florida, Michigan, North Dakota and Tennessee.

For more information about this fact sheet, contact Becki Dobyns, Headquarters, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 202-761-1809, becki.j.dobyns@usace.army.mil. Visit the Corps' webpage for Legislative Information at <http://www.usace.army.mil/inet/functions/cw/cecwa/branches/legislative/leginfo.htm> where you can link to the full conference report language and find other key information. For site-specific information, contact the Corps of Engineers district office in your area: <http://www.usace.army.mil/inet/locations/bdry-pages/>.

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